The Speech Acts of Warning in Presidential Speech

Assist. Lecturer: Emad H. Samir
University of Anbar
College of Education for Humanities
Department of English

المستخلص

تعتبر الخطابات الرئاسية بالغة التعقيد إذ أنها تخطط وتكتب لتناسب مزاج فئة معينة من المتلقين ويبقى موضوع هذه الخطابات العامل الرئيسي لجذب انتباه المتلقي الذي غالبا ما يكون مقتنعا بان ما يقوله المتحدث يصب في مصلحته. تكمن المشكلة في مناقشة هكذا خطابات في نوع المظاهر اللغوية والتداولية للغة المتضمنة في صياغة هذه الخطابات. ويؤدي الموقف نفسه دورا مهما في تفسير المظاهر التداولية المستخدمة في مثل هذه النصوص ويكاد أن يكون أهم عامل لتفسير الرسائل المقصودة في حديث المتكلم. ويعد استعمال الفعل الكلامي واحد من أهم العوامل التي يمكن أن يعتمد عليها المتحدث ليصل إلى المعنى الضمني المراد فهمه أو إدراكه من وراء المعنى الظاهر.

Abstract

Presidential speeches are complex; they are planned and written to suit the mood of certain audience. The theme in such speeches remains the significant factor in making the addressee pay his/her overall attention to the speaker convinced that what the speaker is going to say is for his/her sake. The problem of discussing such kind of speech is the linguistic and pragmatic aspect of language. The context of situation has its role in interpreting the pragmatic aspects employed in the text. It is the most essential and interesting factor in revealing intended messages said by the speaker/writer. The use of speech acts is one of the important factors upon which the speaker can rely to arrive at the deep meaning intended beyond the apparent one. Politicians usually use many linguistic aspects to express illocutionary forces but the most common type is modal + operator + infinitive.

1-Introduction:

Language is the basic tool of communication. It can be used effectively to achieve certain objectives and certain influences. This aspect of language can be observed clearly in the field of politics.

Recent studies concentrate on the complex and interrelated link between language and politics. Both explain the way in which the politician employs language to persuade his hearers of what he is talking about, and thus, he realizes his goals.

The field of politics is one of the major and interesting topics where the kind of language used is quite different from other varieties of language. Among these topics is the political discourse used in writing speeches delivered by presidents and leaders of political parties.

The politicians usually use many different aspects which have their role in highlighting the way political speeches are planned or written to be presented to the hearer or reader. Writers of these speeches resort to the way that draws the addressee's attention so that they can gain the support they need in justifying their deeds.

The study falls into eight sections, The second section deals with speech acts theory. It has two subsections which contain an indication to Austin and Searle, founders of this theory. The third talks about the relation between language and politics and clarifies what is meant by political discourse. The fourth section have a view about techniques of political speech whereas the fifth shows Bush's language which is filled with many aspects of warning . The sixth one contains some samples of Bushe's texts to be analyzed. The last section clarifies the conclusion of the present study.

2. Speech Acts Theory:

The theory of SAs witnessed an outstanding development at the hand of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). They are regarded the pioneers in this field. The key idea of this theory is that many sentences which we utter do not impart information about facts, but they are connected with action : while saying something the speaker performs certain speech act (henceforth ,SA) with an illocutionary force of either threatening, ordering or apologizing …..etc. That is why SAs are called performatives (Coulthard, 1985:13).

SAs should be understood in terms of our understanding to illocutionary and perlocutionary forces which show the speaker's real intention and the way by which he has affected the hearer by issuing a certain SA of a certain illocution. SAs theory is found to establish whether we are offering or aiding or attacking. Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) tackle SAs but each one from his point of view. They classify them into different groups of verbs with different names and diverse illocutionary forces that are either expressed directly or indirectly. Most of SAs are employed indirectly for linguistic consideration as well as to political and social ones. At the linguistic level, the heavy use of ISAs is oriented to enhance the pragmatic framework and content involved in the selected speeches. This use has a stylistic touch and effect on the language the speaker uses and in communicating his real intentions to the hearer. At the political and social level, the use of ISAs is due to the fact that it is a technique by which the speaker can establish and maintain social contact between him and the audience. The use of ISAs can affect the tone and the message the speaker intends to convey directly. Its main function is to mitigate this tone (Coulthard, 1985:15).

Austin mentions three examples to clarify what is meant by performatives which are as follows:

1-I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth.

2-'I do' (take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife.

3-I give and bequeath my watch to my brother.

In the first example , the speaker is not describing what he is doing but performing the action of naming the ship. He also adds that the process of naming a ship must be accompanied with certain procedures such as smashing the bottle against stern. (Ibid).

He stresses the conventional nature of the performative act and the fact that there is an agreed procedure that must be followed. A performative act needs four conditions to work without any misfire:

1-An accepted conventional procedure must be found. This means that certain persons should utter certain words in certain circumstances. According to this condition, Austin states that there is a procedure for christening babies but not dogs, for naming ships but not houses. Acts procedures differ according to countries' cultures. For this reason, no one in England can divorce his wife by saying, "I divorce you, I divorce you, I divorce you".

2-The procedure must be done by a particular person and appropriate circumstances. The uttering of the correct and appropriate words is insufficient to achieve the successful performance of the act but they must be uttered by the appropriate person. Any person can read the marriage service but the ceremony is still invalid.

3-The procedure must be executed by all participants correctly .

4-It must be done in a complete way.

Levinson,(1983:236) distinguishes between three acts that can be performed simultaneously: a locutionary act of saying something in the full sense of "say" an illocutionary act which is an act performed in saying

something and a perlocutionary act, the act performed by or as a result of saying.

2.1 Austin’s Classification of Speech Acts:

Austin (1962:150-51) lays down a classificatory system in which he divides groups of verbs into five categories which are as follows:

(i) Verdictives:

The acts are emerged by giving a verdictives estimate or grade by a judge, umpire…………….etc. The verbs belong to this category are hold, acquire, grade………etc.

(ii) Exercitives:

These acts are used to show that the speaker exercises power, right or influence. The common verbs which represent this category are appoint, order, urge….etc.

(iii) Commissives:

These acts commit the speaker to do something to the hearer. The verbs which are usually used with this category are promise, warn, threaten, swear……etc.

(vi)Behabitives :

These acts are used to express attitudes and social behaviour. They involve the nation of reaction to other people’s behaviour and attitudes. The commonly used verbs with this category are apologize, thank, deplore….etc.

(v) Expositive :

Such acts are emerged to expound views, to conduct or clarify arguments. The acts of this category are represented by these verbs: affirming, stating, reviewing……etc.

2.2 Searle's Modification of Speech Acts (1969):

Searle studies Austin's theory and refuses what is called the illocutionary act, instead, he proposes the propositional act which carries the content and the message of the utterance. He shows that the speaker performs three acts at the same time when he says an utterance: the utterance act (using words and sentences without real meaning), the propositional act (using language to refer to matters in the context of situation) and the illocutionary force (the speaker's intention to do something like threatening, commanding….etc).

Searle's addition to this theory is represented by the distinction he makes between direct speech acts (DSAs) and indirect speech acts (ISAs). He depends on this basis to say that by uttering a statement, like : *It is raining outside,* language users may perform another type of illocutionary act to be a request to close the door or to take an umbrella. (Searle.1969:24.5).

He makes a relation between the three structural forms (declarative, interrogative, and imperative) and the three communicative functions (statements, questions, and requests/ commands).The direct speech act is realized when there is a direct relationship between a structure and a function. He mentions this example to clarify his idea: Can you play the piano?

Direct illocution=The addressee's ability to play the piano.

Indirect illocution= Request to play the piano. (Searle, 1979:60)

2.2.1 Searle's Categories of Speech Acts:

According to Levinson (1983: 240), it is difficult to recognize and distinguish verb meanings because the speaker's intentions are not always explicit and direct. This reason motivated Searle to establish five basic types of SAs: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives.

These are the five major types of illocutionary acts that Searle suggests as modification of Austin's classificatory system of SAs.

(i) Representatives, which commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition. The common verbs are: affirm, deny, report…..etc.

(ii) Directives, which are attempts by the speaker to get the addresses to do something for his sake. The verbs belong to this categorie are request ask, invite …etc.

(iii) Commissives, which commit the speaker to some future of action. This category includes the following verbs: promise, threaten, worn…etc.

(iv) Expressives, which express a psychological state such as apologizing , welcoming, thanking ..etc.

(v) Declaratives, which effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and which tend to relay on elaborate extra-linguistic institutions. Declaring war and christening are among the verbs which belong to this category.

3. Language and Politics:

According to VanDijk (1997:206), language and the way it is used is regarded as a tool of politics, which politicians, or those indulged in this field, employ a great deal to achieve a desired effect or impression on their audience. It is difficult to try to separate language and politics because they are interrelated. Politics surely cannot be conducted without language which is recognized as a powerful tool and weapon for politicians to win and gain public support.

Baily (1976:253-4) states that the bridge between language and politics can be emerged by the skillful and appropriate use of language in several political institutions. This skillful use involves the ability to transmit or to understand spoken messages, the hints, and the veiled threats.

Zheng (2000:1) states that language of politics is described as a highly eclectic language; therefore it is difficult to approach a clear-cut definition of this variety of language for its use depends on the context of situation in which it is used and manipulated to bring about certain objectives. It is important to say that political discourse is not a genre, but a class of genres defined by a social domain, namely that of politics. However, there is a problem in deciding whether political discourse constitutes a domain, a field, or a genre. It is questionable. Neither politics nor political discourse can be defined as an entity; politics is abiquitous. Political discourse is a dynamic linguistic and semantic space in which social meanings are produced or challenged. The theory and practice of political talk is seen to be primarily concerned with power.

Duncan(1969:355) maintains that the function and the use of political discourse become rhetoric of courtship to gain and retain the commitment of the public to those principles and goals that lead to social order.

Crystal (1987:116) states that discourse analysis is the dynamic, social and interactive phenomenon of language because its real meaning is determined and conveyed only through events, where people share diverse beliefs and experiences about the world. Each one of them can understand what is said or written according to his own schemata which are defined by Cook (1989:69) as follows: “Schemata are mental representations of typical situations, and they are used in discourse processing to predict the contents of the particular situation which the discourse describes”. The idea is that the

mind stimulated by key words or phrases in the text, or by the context, activates a knowledge schema, and uses it to make sense of the discourse. This dynamic and social aspect of language has been tackled under what is called pragmatics which its main concern is studying language in terms of actions. Text-receivers must focus on revealing the real intentions of the text producer in order to understand them as it is the case with the use of speech acts, implicatures, presuppositions……….etc (ibid).

4. Techniques of Political Speech-Writing:

The process of planning and writing a political speech should follow certain techniques. These techniques are designed to enable the speaker deliver a meaningful and affective text that can influence the addressee. Zheng(2000:3-9) mentions the basic techniques the political speakers usually resort to attain their goals. These basic techniques are:

(i) Inclusive Technique:

This technique is used as an attempt by politicians to persuade their audience that their ideas are identical to people's ones. In this technique, the speaker assimilates himself/herself to group of people in order to win their support . (ibid:5)

(ii) Testimony Technique:

In this technique, the speaker makes a list of achievements or deeds of individual parties or some prominent political figures to construct a fair well-balanced argument (Ibid:6).

(iii) Citing Historical Speech Technique :

Political leaders usually depend on mentioning historical speeches made by former political leaders to support their opinions and to say that what they will

do for nation is the right thing. This technique is used to make the effective addresses. (ibid)

(iv) Inversion Technique:

In this technique, the politicians usually utilize a specific expression or words in a way to mean something that is totally opposite to what is said.(ibid)

(v) Fear Technique:

The title of this technique is suggestive. Politicians try to create or generate a sort of threat or warning to the public, and then provide solutions to these problems. They agitate the public and make them afraid of something that will happen in the future, and then they depict themselves as the only persons who are capable of offering solutions. (ibid)

(vii) Religious Citation Technique:

According to this technique, politicians use proverbs, idioms or biblical utterances which we need to create plain and emotionally suggestive words. Their use is important to pacify the public in order to make the bitter life more palatable.

(VIII) Emotional Technique

The speakers of this technique usually appear their emotions to create the wanted effect. They do that by talking in a hushed tone or a rising tone. They exaggerate in using body language and facial expressions to get what they want. (ibid).

5. G.W Bush's Language :

Bush is distinguished from the other former American presidents by his employing many different illocutionary acts. The use of SAs can shed light on the development of the plot of the texts. Of course, context of situation

plays a major role in deciding the total SAs; therefore we can see that Bush's speeches after the events of September are full of various illocutionary forces while this amount is not found before the incident. Bush is utilizing and manipulating those of promising, warning and threatening in addressing his enemies. The most commonly used SAs in Bush's speeches are those of commissives and directives but the focus will be on the former which involves warning and threatening the subject of this study.

In these acts, the speaker commits himself to do something in the future. The well-known acts used in this category are those of promising, threatening, warning, challenging, swearing,…etc. The speeches of the American leaders after the events of September are filled with these acts. In discussing this kind of SAs, it is important to indicate that the acts of promising, warning and threatening are the dominant ones and they usually come together in one single utterance to convey two or more different illocutions instead of one illocution (Leech,1983:175)

Here, promises are considered "empty" acts that contain many forms of pragmatic aspects. In other words, when the speaker makes a promise, he commits himself to do something for the hearer while threatening and warning are said to do something to the hearer that may not be desirable to him. The boundaries between threat and promise in political discourses are not obvious but the common point in both of them are future events. (Yule,1997:50)

According to Brooks (2003:1), Bush employs dependency- creating language which is characterized by its use of contempt and intimidation expressions to shame others and make them submit to his desperate administration. Bush is described as a symbolic war man whose voice is a high-pitched petulant whine. It has been maintained that Bush's command of the English language is not too firm: he mispronounces words and uses the

wrong words. He orders his words syntactically in an odd way which makes it ambiguous. After the events of 9/11th , he employed the term crusade as a reaction to the act of terrorism and was subjected to lose Arab leaders' support in the region. Bush uses some linguistic technique that induces surrender to his will. One of these techniques is the empty language technique in which broad statements are used, and described as being so abstract and mean so little. It is used to describe negative motivations to others, and to rename and reframe opposing viewpoints. Bush also uses the personalization technique whose main function is to draw the addresses focus and attention to the speaker's personality. By using this technique, Bush depicts himself as the only person who can save USA from its catastrophes. Learned helplessness technique is also used by him to generate fear and to make people incapable of solving their problems. It is important to say that Bush's negative statements make his addressee more persuasive and effective than that of any other former American president.

The uses of speech acts are frequent and made intentionally by president Bush in his speeches after the events of September. This use is due to match what happened to America on that day which was a disaster to it and changed its policy. Most of the promises made by him after that incident carry a sense of warning or threatening to revenge upon those terrorists wherever they are found. Bush is talent in his using of SAs to assure the Americans and the world that what happened in that day won't be without punishment. (ibid:1-2).

6.Text Analysis:

The following three texts were said after the events of September as a reaction of what happened in that date.

6-1The First Text:

In the first text which is the first inaugural address of George W. Bush, there are three samples through them the use of speech acts of warning can be clarified:

1-*America remains engaged in the world, by history and by choice, shaping a balance of power that favors freedom. (text1:p2).*

Bush uses the simple verb form of *remains* to express two indirect illocutions which imply his warning to the states that try to beach the balance of power, and reminding them that America has the right to act to keep the balance of power because of its historical and strategic role in the world.

2- *If our country does not be lead. (text1:p2)*

Bush's words involve indirect illocution .He tries to say that America is responsible for designing and leading the cause of freedom. The use of conditional- if is less common in this kind of speech but it is impressive in expressing the illocutionary act of warning.

3-*We will defend our allies and our interests. (text1:p2)*

Bush here uses the modal operator (will)+ infinitive to express his determination and intention to do something in the future. This use is most common in this kind of speech.

6-2 The Second Text:

In the second text which is said to a joint session of congress and the American people in September 21,2001,many linguistic forms are used but the most common form is the use of modal operator + infinitive. Bush uses this form frequently to express his determination to do something in the future. He does the best because Murphy (1994:42) explains the difference between this form and the others by saying that we use the form (will + infinitive) when we

decide to do something at the time of speaking. The following samples are mentioned to prove what is said:

4-*Nor will we forget the citizens of 80 other nations who died with our own. (text2:p1)*

5-*The Taliban must act, and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate.(tex2:p2).*

6-*We will direct every resource at our command .. every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war…. to the disruption and to the defeat of the global terror network.(text2:p3).*

7-*We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place, until there is no refuge or no rest, and we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. (text 2: p3.)*

8- *I will not yield ,I will not rest, I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security of the American people. (text 2:p5).*

9-*From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime. (text2:p3)*

Through the above sentences, the reader can notice the many times Bush uses the form of modal operator + infinitive to say to the world that these are not merely words but they are acts and this is what happened.

10-*Deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of Al Qaeda who hide in your land. Release all foreign nationals, including American citizens, you have unjustly imprisoned. Protect foreign journalists , diplomats and aid workers in your country. (text2:p2).*

11-*Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that support them. (text2:p2.)*

12-*Our war on terror begins with all Qaeda, but it does not end there. (text2:p5).*

13-*I have a message for our military. Be ready. (tex2:p4).*

14-*This is my reminder of lives that ended, and the task that does not end. (text2:p4*).

In the above sentences, Bush uses present simple tense and imperative to direct and clarify his real intent but the rate of this use is rare when it is compared with the form of modal operator + infinitive.

6-3 The Third Text:

In the last text in the present study which is said in December 13,2000 Bush utters the following words to emphasize the idea that his country has the ability to defeat and overcome his enemy everywhere.

> *Together we'll have a bipartisan foreign policy true to our values and true to our friends, and we will have a military equal to every challenge an superior to every adversary.*
>
> *(text3:p2)*

7-Conclusion:

The present study shows that speech act theory is applicable in presidential speech in general and in Bushe's speech in particular because the use of implicit speech acts is the best way to deliver a message in flexible style. This implicit speech can be expressed by many linguistic forms but most of its users prefer the form of modal + operator because it shows the speaker's intention and determination to do something desirable in the near future.

It also shows that Searle's classification of speech act verbs seem to be the most convincing one since it describes illocutionary acts of warning according to their aim represented by committing the addressee to avoid something.

Bibliography

Austin, J.L.(1962). How to Do Things with Words. Oxford: Clavendon press.

Baily, F.G.(1976),1-Speech in Orissa. In W.O' Barr and Y.O'Barr(eds) Language and Politics. Mouton: The Hague.

Brooks, R.(2003). The Language of Power, Fear, and Emptiness. htte: //WWW. reclaimdemocracy .org/weekly-2003/bush language power fear htm.

Cook, G.(1989) Discourse. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Couthard, M.(1985) An Introduction to Discourse Analysis. London: Longman Group limited.

Crystal, D.(1987). The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Duncan, H. (1969). A Sociological Model of Social Interaction as Determined by Communication. In Bueckert (Ed), Critical. Response to Kenneth Burk: 1924-1966,pp. 350-357 Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press.

Levinson, S.C. (1983). An Introduction to Sociolinguistics. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Inc.

Murphy, R.(1994). English Grammar in Use. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

Searle J.R (1969). Speech Act: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language. Cambridge. Cambridge University press.

……….(1979). Expressions and Meaning: Studies in The Theory of Speech Acts. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Van Dijk, T.(1997). Political Discourse and Political Cognition. Congress Political Discourse, Aston University. http:/ /www. hum.uva. nl/ tean / astonhtm.

Yule, G.(1997). Pragmatics. Oxford: Oxford University press.

Zheng, T. (2000). Characteristics of Austrian Political Language Rhetoric: Tactics of Gaining Public Support and Shrinking Responsibility. School of Asian Language and Studies: University of Tasmania- http://www. imm. se/ intercultural.htm.